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Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson ..... (Iceland)
later: Ms. Kaszás ..... (Hungary)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by the President of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Lajčák** (Slovakia), President of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, said that the Third Committee had the potential to make a real difference, since so much of its work had a direct impact on people's lives. He encouraged delegations to reach beyond entrenched positions in their discussions of human rights and development and to seek to better understand one another and find solutions.

2. Promoting human rights was an overarching principle of the work of the United Nations. It was the foundation upon which collective efforts to advance human development and create peace were built. Human rights violations were often at the root of conflict, while upholding human rights contributed to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights were all equally important, and States had an obligation to uphold and protect all human rights for all people without discrimination. They also had a duty to address violations whenever and wherever they occurred; he hoped the Committee would not turn a blind eye to the difficult situations affecting people around the world.

3. Since human rights and development were mutually reinforcing, addressing both would make it possible to uphold human dignity and promote well-being. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was in its second year, and people faced serious social and humanitarian challenges in the quest for sustainable development. Those realities must be reflected in the discussions but real answers must be sought in the resolutions.

4. As a gender champion, he looked forward to the Committee's deliberations and outputs on the advancement of women. It was vital to continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a key tool in the achievement of sustainable development. The Committee was the main body responsible for ensuring that States remained focused on the social dimensions of sustainable development so that they could work towards fulfilling the commitments made to their citizens in 2015.

5. Lastly, commending the Committee on the recent improvements in its working methods, he said that the changes would lighten the burden for all, especially States with smaller delegations. Deliberations in the Third Committee were not always easy, but they were essential, and he encouraged delegations to maintain a spirit of dialogue and consensus in their work.

Agenda item 68: Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/72/164, A/72/218, A/72/275, A/72/276 and A/72/356)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/72/208)

6. **Ms. Gamba** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report (A/72/276), said that it focused on two major concerns, namely, the protection of education in situations of armed conflict, and the deeply worrying trend of increasing denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to conflict. Unfortunately, the developments identified in her report had continued unabated in 2017.

7. In Afghanistan, girls' education remained a direct target. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 174 attacks on schools had been verified between April and June 2017. The majority of those schools had been destroyed, looted or burned down by the Kamuina Nsapu militia in the Kasai region. It would take years, if not decades, before that region and its children recovered from losing those educational opportunities. The Committee must strive to promote the Safe Schools Declaration, since the price of a child losing access to education was too high. As the Sustainable Development Goals indicated, all children must have access to education, even in the most difficult circumstances. The Committee should do what it could to ensure that appropriate funding was available for education programmes in conflict-related emergency situations and to ensure that appropriate provisions on children affected by armed conflict were included in the global compact on refugees, in particular in relation to unaccompanied minors.

8. The denial of humanitarian access exemplified the vulnerability of children in conflict zones. In South Sudan, over 150 incidents had been verified by the United Nations for the period April to June 2017. Humanitarian access in Myanmar had also been very difficult throughout 2017. In Afghanistan, over 80,000 children had not received their polio vaccinations in the second quarter of 2017, owing to direct attacks and anti-vaccination bans imposed by armed groups, as well as general insecurity. The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic was perhaps the most worrying, particularly in relation to children's basic needs. Since the beginning of 2017, it had been possible to reach

only 38 per cent of people in besieged areas and 12 per cent of those in hard-to-reach areas. One hundred thousand lifesaving items had been denied or removed from convoys during the same period. Areas controlled by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remained inaccessible, with the group blocking all deliveries of humanitarian aid. The Committee had an important role to play in emphasizing the norms of international law and in ensuring that the delivery of humanitarian aid to children was not politicized. It should therefore continue to include those elements in its resolutions and in other areas of its work.

9. Her report aimed to articulate her vision and outline how best to assess progress, raise awareness, promote the collection of information, work closely with relevant entities and foster international cooperation to ensure respect for children's rights and stop grave violations. A key component of her proposed approach was working with regional and subregional bodies and organizations, and the Committee should encourage and facilitate such cooperation. A subregional approach to strengthening the law to protect children could make a real difference. In addition, collaboration with all child protection actors was essential, while applying best practices and lessons learned required a tailored and context-specific approach.

10. Lastly, her Office and its partners must be provided with sufficient resources to enable them to focus on mandated tasks. In addition to fulfilling its heavy reporting requirements and engaging with parties to conflict, it would be very beneficial if her Office was able to expand its reach and devote more attention to areas such as awareness-raising and best practices. Such initiatives would aid the ultimate goal of preventing both conflict and grave violations affecting children in situations of conflict.

11. **Ms. Verstichel** (Belgium) said that her delegation deplored the attacks on schools and hospitals described in the report and was pleased to announce that Belgium had endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.

12. She would like to hear more about the Special Representative's strategy for engaging regional and subregional organizations in the coming years. With regard to the reintegration of children, her delegation wished to recall the recommendations of the international conference on the rehabilitation and reintegration of war-affected children, held in Brussels in 2009. She asked how the Special Representative would consolidate commitments with armed groups that had expressed their intention to engage with the United Nations on action plans and what the child protection capacity of peacekeeping operations would be in view of diminishing peacekeeping budgets.

13. **Ms. Kirianoff Crimmins** (Switzerland) said that the mandate must be accorded sufficient financial and political support. Switzerland welcomed the Special Representative's vision, especially her call to increase the synergies between the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and civil society in order to better protect children and identify best practices.

14. Civilians must be given access to assistance and protection, and humanitarian actors must have access to civilians. Switzerland called on all parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law and to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians living in areas under their control. It also supported the Special Representative's call for parties to conflict to redouble their efforts to depoliticize the issue of humanitarian access. Denial of humanitarian access to children was one of the grave violations covered by the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and she would like to know whether the Special Representative thought it should be included as an additional trigger in the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.

15. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) asked what initiatives the Special Representative was planning with regard to cooperation and awareness-raising on the grave violations. He also wondered how Member States and the United Nations could support the implementation of the priorities of her mandate.

16. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) said that the refusal of Governments to implement protective mechanisms that would improve conditions for their civilians was very disappointing and was particularly serious in relation to peacekeeping and humanitarian work. Regarding education, alternatives were needed when facilities had been destroyed. In every situation, political willingness was the key to progress. She wondered if the Special Representative could elaborate further on the relationship between humanitarian aid offered to Governments and the willingness of those Governments to deliver it.

17. **Mr. Matt** (Liechtenstein) said that Member States were encouraged in the report to take appropriate measures to reintegrate children who had lived through conflict, giving special attention to the needs of girls, and to provide the necessary political, technical and financial support to reintegration programmes. His delegation would appreciate more information on what such reintegration programmes

might look like and whether any States could offer their experiences as best practice.

18. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that Mexico had chaired the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict when Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) had been adopted, which had enabled the international community to address violations of children's rights such as murder, mutilation and abuse. Strengthening the Special Representative's mandate was a priority for his country, and it was one of the first examples of the Secretary-General's prevention agenda in action.

19. His delegation wondered what States could do to reintegrate children who had been recruited during armed conflict and how best practices might vary when it came to integrating children who had been born into armed conflict.

20. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) asked what ideas had proved the most successful over the past 20 years since the establishment of the post of the Special Representative and what could be incorporated into future work. She asked for an outline of priority tasks and any changes that could be expected in the near future. Her delegation would also be interested to hear about the campaign that was currently being elaborated by the Office of the Special Representative as a continuation of the successful Children, Not Soldiers project.

21. **Ms. Bhengu** (South Africa) said that her delegation noted with regret that the majority of children affected by armed conflict were from the developing world. The contemporary manifestation of children in armed conflict seemed to be fuelled by the unregulated activities of private military and security companies, which would continue on that trajectory with impunity until the United Nations human rights system elaborated a legally binding instrument to hold them accountable.

22. **Mr. O'Brien** (Observer for the European Union) said that the list contained in the annex to the Secretary-General's annual report on children in armed conflict should continue to serve as an objective tool to identify perpetrators based on facts and evidence, with every party held to the same standard. Despite the success of the recently concluded Children, Not Soldiers campaign, the European Union remained concerned by the current international environment, which put children at risk of being affected by armed conflict. He asked for a more detailed explanation of the new campaign that would focus on all six grave violations against children, and how Member States could contribute to that initiative as well as to the action plan being developed by the Secretary-General to reinforce respect for international law and to the lessons-learned exercises to determine best practices.

23. **Mr. Dang** (France) said that, as the report highlighted repeatedly, the international community was facing enormous challenges. Besides the recruitment of children by armed groups, there were new threats, such as the indoctrination and use of children as human bombs by terrorist groups. France called on States that had not already done so to endorse the Paris commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups.

24. With regard to the Special Representative's recommendation to compile best practices, his delegation wondered whether a formal system or mechanism could be established for sharing best practices.

25. **Mr. Overskott** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, asked how a lessons-learned exercise could be conducted that would be effective and relevant to field-based efforts to protect children. Norway appreciated the emphasis placed on access to education; the report underlined the strong link between investing in education in conflict and better protecting education from attack in order to be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. Protecting schools, including by deterring their military use, meant protecting children. Norway was encouraged by the Special Representative's longstanding support of the Safe Schools Declaration and was proud that it had already been endorsed by 69 States. His delegation wondered what more States could do collectively to encourage others to support it.

27. **Ms. Birštunaitė** (Lithuania) said that her delegation shared the Special Representative's concerns regarding the rising trend of denying humanitarian access to children in armed conflict and the increasing politicization of humanitarian aid provision. Denial of access was the only grave violation that did not trigger listing in the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. She wondered whether expanding the scope of the triggers and including the parties responsible for denying humanitarian access in the annexes could serve as a deterrent.

28. **Ms. Shaheen** (United Arab Emirates) said that while her country did not question the goal of protecting children all over the world, the issue was of special importance in her region. The United Arab

Emirates welcomed the coordination that had been undertaken by the Office with member States and urged closer consultation with national Governments and reliable sources to avoid misinformation.

29. **Mr. Forman** (United Kingdom) said that his country welcomed the call to raise public awareness. Children continued to be targeted, coerced and exploited during conflict. The Government had identified children and armed conflict as a priority in its 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review and continued to provide financial support to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. He asked the Special Representative to elaborate on any plans to raise awareness of her mandate.

30. **Mr. Koehler** (Germany) said that the Children and Armed Conflict mandate, with its fact-based monitoring and reporting mechanism, had played an indispensable role in protecting children in conflict. Germany appreciated the participation of the Office of the Special Representative in the annual workshop on children and armed conflict in Berlin in 2017. He asked which members of peacekeeping and special political missions took the lead on action plan negotiation and compliance work.

31. **Ms. Ortega Gutiérrez** (Spain) said that her delegation was particularly concerned by the difficulties of gaining humanitarian access to civilians. The provisions of international humanitarian law were not optional and they also played a preventive role.

32. Spain had made serious, firm and ongoing commitments to the protection of children in armed conflict. It had supported the "Children, not soldiers" campaign and had played an important role in drafting and adopting Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) on attacks against hospitals and doctors. In addition, it had participated in the Paris ministerial conference on protecting children in armed conflict and in the International Conference on Safe Schools, held in Buenos Aires.

33. **Ms. Abushawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that, while her delegation appreciated the efforts of the Office of the Special Representative, the report did not go far enough in documenting the reality on the ground for children living under military occupation. While, understandably, it was not possible to include every violation perpetrated against Palestinian children, the report should at least recall recommendations that had not been heeded by Israel, such as the recommendation made in its 2015 report to take concrete and immediate steps to protect children, schools and hospitals, in particular by ensuring accountability for alleged violations, which had clearly been ignored by the occupying Power. In addition, the detrimental effects of the ten-year blockade of Gaza had not been mentioned.

34. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that the Special Representative should pay attention to all situations of armed conflict that affected children and should gather information on the crimes committed against them, including the attack by the Armenian armed forces in July 2017, which had resulted in the death of a two-year-old girl.

35. His delegation also called on the Special Representative to give due attention to the protection of internally displaced children in her work, since they were just as vulnerable as refugees and sometimes more so.

36. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the Special Representative's support in successfully removing children from the ranks of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and of his Government's efforts to reduce the numbers of illegal armed groups operating outside the law and perpetrating violations against children and adolescents. Significant progress had been made in preventing the recruitment of children in Colombia, since there had been a significant drop in the numbers recruited from January 2013 to April 2017. Nevertheless, challenges remained. Government institutions would continue to strengthen prevention strategies in order to put an end to those practices.

37. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) asked the Special Representative to elaborate further on her approach to using best practices and lessons learned to ensure that schools were protected from military use during armed conflict.

38. **Ms. Simpson** (United States of America) said that armed conflict was having a worse impact on children than 20 years earlier, which made the Special Representative's mission more important than ever. Children were increasingly subject to violence, exploitation and abuse, and the evidence was mounting that it was not incidental; rather, children were being directly targeted.

39. Given the gravity and long-term implications of that situation, the United States was committed to addressing the issue in the Security Council and through all its channels of influence. Her delegation wished to impress on Member States the critical importance of full compliance with all international

obligations and commitments on children and armed conflict.

40. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation hoped that the Special Representative would carry out her mandate with full transparency and objectivity and would not rely on the reports fabricated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other civil society organizations on humanitarian affairs in Syria. The Syrian Government was responsible for coordinating the entry of humanitarian aid into the country and had facilitated United Nations humanitarian access to areas that had been besieged by terrorist groups. To date, 7,000 requests for access to those areas had been approved in coordination with the United Nations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

41. **Mr. Alkadi** (Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia was committed to cooperating with the United Nations to protect children's rights. It deeply regretted that children around the world were subjected to oppression and violence, targeted militarily, killed due to their religious affiliation, recruited into conflicts and used as human shields.

42. **Mr. Odisho** (Iraq) asked the Special Representative to share best practices for helping children subject to brainwashing in schools by armed extremist groups such as ISIL.

43. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that the children of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia had been suffering as a result of attacks in border areas. Some of the victims of the Azerbaijani attack of April 2016 had been children. The only possible solution to the conflict was a peaceful resolution mediated by the Minsk Group, to which Azerbaijan should show commitment.

44. **Ms. Gamba** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that she had tried to increase engagement between her office and Member States and had commenced discussions on the opening of regional chapters that would deal with issues related to children and armed conflict at various subregional bodies.

45. The only way to end violations against children in conflict was to put a stop to the conflicts themselves. Member States should ensure that all future peace agreements contained an article that explained how the parties to conflicts intended to demobilize children, as that would facilitate the process of reintegration, rehabilitation and retraining of children.

46. Child protection personnel on the ground, such as UNICEF staff and peacekeeping forces, constituted the front line in the effort to protect children, as they had access to armed actors and could explain what was expected of them. An increase in such personnel would improve delivery of services to children, but that required the generation of new resources. In the Central African Republic, for example, half of all demobilized children had been re-recruited into armed forces due to a lack of funding for reintegration projects.

47. Awareness-raising campaigns on the ground were also needed. A small programme on the recruitment and use of children in conflict that had been rolled out in only six countries had nevertheless had a significant impact, reaching members of armed groups and resulting in increased willingness among armed groups and Governments to engage in action plans with United Nations agencies. While many people had come to understand why recruitment and use were unacceptable, they did not always understand that attacks on schools and hospitals were equally unacceptable, and awareness-raising programmes that disseminated information on all six grave violations could address such attitudes.

48. Two main issues of concern were the detention of children and cross-border operations. As cross-border movements by armed groups and child recruits had increased, a subregional approach was needed to foster a common understanding of the problem among neighbouring countries. In addition, common protocols should be developed on how to deal with demobilized children and children with disabilities.

49. The Special Representative wished to act as a "force multiplier" that brought together like-minded persons and proactively collaborated with civil society organizations, Member States and research institutes with on-the-ground experience. Her task was to find ways for those actors to collaborate. It was important for Member States to provide financial and political support to those Member States that faced serious resource constraints. Reintegration and legal reform were two areas that deserved special attention in that regard.

50. Member States should host regionally focused workshops so that information on the dynamic phenomenon of children and armed conflict could be collected for analysis. It was important to highlight the role of advisors in operationalizing action plans, strengthen the overall child protection architecture in the countries of concern and ensure that there was adequate child protection capacity on the ground.

51. Turning to questions about humanitarian assistance and access, she said that denial of humanitarian access was discussed in her report, and that she would continue her advocacy on that issue. However, it was the up to the Security Council to decide what to do with the information that was collected. She looked forward to working with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to find ways to facilitate humanitarian access and mitigate violations against children. With respect to the question of how to deal with children who had never been integrated into their societies, it would be necessary to begin such community-building from scratch.

52. **Mr. Forsyth** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/72/356), the girl child (A/72/218) and the follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/72/208), said that progress had been made on children's issues. There had been dramatic reductions in child mortality and in stunting due to malnutrition, and the number of children in primary school had increased. Although that progress should be celebrated, two significant challenges remained. First, violence and conflict was a serious problem. One out of every four children in the world was affected by conflict or natural disasters. For example, over 60 per cent of Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar to Bangladesh were children, who were not only vulnerable to violence but also to waterborne diseases. Second, inequality and inequity were problems. Millions of children were being left behind due to gender, disability and poverty.

53. During a visit to Borno State in Nigeria, representatives from UNICEF had spoken to girls who had been kidnaped by Boko Haram. They had told stories of captivity, beatings, rape and disease, but they wanted those stories to be heard. Moreover, they wanted the chance to go to school. There needed to be more investment in education, particularly girls' education, in conflict-affected countries. In Borno State, for example, over half of all schools had been destroyed and thousands of teachers had been killed or displaced. Such investment would help children overcome trauma and give them hope. In the words of Muzoon Almellehan, the youngest-ever UNICEF goodwill ambassador and a former refugee currently living in Europe, conflict could strip away a person's home, family and pride, but it could never take away a person's knowledge.

54. **Ms. Santos Pais** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children), introducing her annual report, (A/72/275), said that a child died every five minutes as a result of violence, and one billion children around the world experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence every year. Such abuse was often hidden because the victims were too afraid to speak out, as in the case of children accused of witchcraft. Those children were often persons with disabilities or with albinism, or perceived as "different", and were frequently abandoned by their families and forced to live in the streets. They faced stigma and were often murdered in violent rituals. There was a reluctance to speak openly about that problem and the sense of impunity with respect to that abuse was widespread.

55. Children made up more than half of the refugee population. Any future negotiations related to the global compacts on refugees and migration must take children's experiences into account. To that end, she would issue a report in collaboration with UNICEF that was based on a survey of over 170,000 children. The survey had found that violence was the major reason children left their countries and that violence and exploitation continued to be enormous challenges during the journey and upon arrival at the destination.

56. Civil society organizations were important partners in combatting violence against children In June 2017, the leading international child-focused agencies had agreed to join forces to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and create platforms that would enable children to express their concerns and provide input on policy decisions.

57. **Mr. Monteiro** (Brazil) said that his country believed that protecting children from violence was essential for the achievement of just societies, and was pleased to see that Member States had made tangible progress in mainstreaming policies for protecting children from violence. He asked the Special Representative to outline the main issues related to the protection of children from violence that were not adequately covered by national legislation, and to discuss the normative gaps that needed to be addressed in that regard.

58. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that her Government had made several amendments to its constitution in a step towards eliminating violence against children. Algeria commended the collaboration by the Special Representative with regional organizations, including the African Union, and her support of African efforts to end child marriage.

59. *Ms. Kaszás (Hungary), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

60. **Mr. O'Brien** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union looked forward to cooperating with the Office to eliminate violence against children by 2030. It also wished to underline the importance of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and the Solutions Summit that would be held in 2018.

61. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children discussed the importance of cooperation with the private sector, and he asked for best-practice examples of such initiatives. His delegation also wished to hear more about the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative and how it contributed to the implementation of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, he asked about the results of initiatives to end bullying, including cyberbullying.

62. **Ms. Cid Carreño** (Chile) said that her country was grateful for the Special Representative's support in establishing a comprehensive system to safeguard children's and adolescents' rights, especially with regard to criminalizing and eradicating new forms of violence. She would like to know how the Special Representative envisaged working more closely with national parliaments or transmitting to them the concern regarding the elimination of all forms of violence.

63. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia) said that the 2030 Agenda was an opportunity to ensure that all children grew up free from violence, abuse and exploitation, in particular through the achievement of target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. Violence compromised all rights of the child, and Colombia had implemented numerous action plans to ensure the issue was given sufficient priority, including a programme to promote comprehensive protection and action on issues such as child labour, the consumption of psychoactive substances and illegal recruitment. Colombia would continue to work towards the implementation of national household surveys on children's exposure to violence. By compiling real data, it would be possible to uncover the truth regarding the problem of violence in children's lives and prepare national action plans to address it.

65. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that the Special Representative's mandate had evolved over time and was at the forefront of identifying best practices and new issues as well as producing statistics and hard data. His country was committed to the protection of children and the eradication of all forms of violence affecting them. For that reason, Mexico was participating in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children as a pathfinder country and had launched a national action plan to prevent and respond to violence against children and adolescents.

66. His delegation would like to know whether the detention of migrants who were minors constituted a form of violence against childhood, and how synergies could be improved between fulfilment of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

67. **Ms. Omiya** (Japan) said that her country welcomed the seventh cross-regional meeting for advancing the protection of children from violence that had been held in Manila in June 2017 and supported the conclusions and recommendations from that meeting. Japan was determined to end child poverty and violence against children and enhance youth employment. It would be helpful if the Special Representative could share her views on how to promote Goal 16.2, and what measures were needed at the domestic, regional and international levels.

68. **Mr. Heinzer** (Switzerland) said that Switzerland reaffirmed its support for a global study on children deprived of liberty, to which it had already committed itself financially. Welcoming the focus placed on the elimination of violence against children in the context of new technological developments and related problems, in particular cyberbullying, Switzerland encouraged the Special Representative to continue to take into account the views of children. He asked what new risks arising from the use of new technology by children and increasing urbanization would have to be addressed before 2030.

69. **Ms. Birštunaitė** (Lithuania) said that, in 2017, the Parliament of Lithuania had adopted amendments to the law on the protection of children's rights to ban all types of violence against children, including corporal punishment. Her country was particularly concerned by the widespread practice of bullying and welcomed the attention given to the issue, including through the launching of the *Global Status Report on School Violence and Bullying* and the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform for data and research. She asked where the focus should be in the fight against bullying and what further measures could be taken to prevent that scourge.

70. **Ms. Dravec** (Slovenia) said that, as part of its efforts to combat violence against children, Slovenia had adopted the Family Code in 2017 and was preparing a new resolution on family policy. The

Human Rights Ombudsman Act had been amended to make the long-standing "Advocate — a child's voice" project a part of the Ombudsman's permanent activities. Following the example of other European countries, Slovenia had established a house for children to enhance child protection in practice and prevent the revictimization of child victims of crime. She asked for examples of good practices in strengthening social protection to address poverty in order to mitigate the risk of violence against children.

71. **Mr. Ariturk** (United States of America) said that the United States encouraged Member States to collaborate with the Special Representative in her efforts to collect additional data and conduct research on violence against children. While all Governments should do their part to reduce the alarming number of children affected by violence, individuals who were aware of abuses committed against children were also responsible and must be educated to speak up. He asked the Special Representative to share best practices and effective interventions employed by countries to combat bullying, including cyberbullying.

72. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) asked the Special Representative how her work had changed in practical terms since the inclusion in the 2030 Agenda of a target to end all forms of violence against children, and whether any progress had been made in the development of monitoring methodologies and the collection of disaggregated data on violence against children.

73. The Russian Federation was pleased that the ministerial declaration adopted at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017 had focused on the protection of the rights of the child, including their right to freedom from violence. Investing in children was important for the achievement not only of already existing goals but also of future ones.

74. **Ms. Tasuja** (Estonia) said that collaboration with faith-based organizations was a good way to empower communities at the national and regional levels to improve their lives, which, combined with external aid, created solid conditions for progress. She asked for examples of how faith-based organizations had made such an impact and whether there were similar cases in which communities had empowered themselves to improve the conditions of children's human rights.

75. **Mr. Hassan** (Maldives) said that the Maldives had recently launched a mobile reporting application and a 24-hour call centre through which incidents of violence could be reported anonymously, which had led to a surge in reporting, often by children themselves, in the past six months. He asked what steps should be taken and what additional mechanisms established to encourage children to report cases of abuse.

76. **Ms. Marcinkeviciute** (United Kingdom) said that, in 2016, her Government had pledged £50 million over five years to tackle violence against children globally. It was fully committed to tackling online child sexual exploitation and to accelerating progress on targets 16.2 and 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a founding member of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, the United Kingdom was stepping up evidence, policy and programming to be at the forefront of the international agenda to end violence against children. Its £35 million, five-year programme to tackle female genital mutilation was the largest of any individual country. Through its £39 million programme on accelerating action to end child marriage, it was strengthening legal frameworks and supporting the associated shifts in behaviour necessary to end the practice.

77. The United Kingdom agreed that violence perpetuated poverty and was of the view that education was the best route out of poverty. She asked the Special Representative to outline her efforts to incorporate every child's right to education into her work to eradicate violence against children.

78. **Mr. Torbergsen** (Norway) said that it was essential to identify and treat destructive childhood experiences in a timely and adequate manner, otherwise they might have devastating consequences on adult life. When calling for the global study on children deprived of liberty, the General Assembly had emphasized the importance of taking into account the views and experiences of children. He asked the Special Representative how she saw that effort going forward and whether she was promoting any particular initiative in that field.

79. **Ms. Andujar** (Dominican Republic) said that, with the support of the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF, her country had drafted and implemented a road map for the elimination of violence against children. One of its objectives was to review and update the legal framework protecting children and adolescents from violence, and to prohibit physical punishment within families. Her Government was pleased to report that a draft law was being prepared that would strengthen the institutional framework for promoting positive forms of discipline. The proposal would establish guidelines for comprehensive public policies on preventing violence

against children and supporting vulnerable families. Her delegation would like to know how the Special Representative was supporting national processes to end violence against children.

80. **Ms. Al Emadi** (Qatar) asked what challenges were faced by Member States in terms reporting and how Member States could fill the gaps to further enhance reporting.

81. **Mr. Bastida** (Spain) said that his country had a comprehensive and cross-cutting policy on the detection, prevention and eradication of violence. Combating violence against children had become a legislative and institutional goal and the childhood and adolescence protection system had been overhauled. His Government had also begun drafting a law that would provide children with comprehensive protection from violence.

82. With regard to bullying, the Spanish education system included an ethics course, and a free hotline had been set up so that children could report violence and receive assistance. Spain welcomed the establishment of a platform for gathering data on bullying and school violence at the international symposium organized in January 2017.

83. **Ms. Bhengu** (South Africa) said that, over the years, her Government had continued to strive towards building a more caring society in which all children could grow, play and learn in safe environments, free from poverty, violence, disease and food insecurity. South Africa commended the Special Representative for highlighting the important role that the corporate sector could play in the effort to eradicate violence against children. In that regard, South Africa sought to ensure the elaboration of a legally binding instrument to regulate the activities of multinational companies and private military and security companies to protect the rights of children. The heartbreaking plight of children on the move needed to be addressed in a holistic manner, and the full commitment of all States was required to ensure the success of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees.

84. **Ms. Al-Nussairy** (Iraq) drew attention to the child protection policy introduced by the Iraqi Government in 2017 in coordination with the UNICEF office in Baghdad and certain civil society organizations. The policy set forth a number of programmes and measures to address issues of prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation and reintegration, and provided for monitoring and reporting mechanisms and assistance measures.

85. **Ms. Santos País** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children), in response to questions relating to the opportunity of the 2030 Agenda, said that most, if not all, of the Sustainable Development Goals would be compromised unless investments were made in children. Comprehensive national plans with violence against children as a cross-cutting concern, a strong normative foundation reaffirming the commitments made by States to protect children from violence and data on violence against children were needed. Many countries did not have the data needed to understand the magnitude of the phenomenon. Many countries, however, collected important administrative data and carried out household surveys, and that work should be built upon. The capacity of national statistical offices needed to be enhanced to gather, analyse and disseminate data. The views of all children needed to be captured, while ensuring that interactions with them were ethically sound and did not cause them further harm.

86. With the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, an important road map had been established, recognizing that violence against children needed to be addressed at the municipal level. A network of mayors had been established to that end.

87. With respect to legislation, very few countries had clear safeguards on how to support child victims and witnesses. Brazil had adopted good legislation on the matter, which should be promoted elsewhere. Countries often lacked a comprehensive legal prohibition of all forms of violence against children and legislation to address online sexual abuse. Many countries risked going backwards, especially in the area of juvenile justice. In that regard, the minimum age of criminal responsibility should not be lowered.

88. In answer to the question of whether the tensions in migration and refugee situations were a form of violence, children in those situations endured psychological and physical violence and sexual abuse, often in overcrowded facilities that they could not leave at their own will. Such tensions therefore needed to be seriously addressed and brought to an end, and children needed to be protected from violence in that context.

89. As a good example of efforts to reduce poverty and violence, every child in Indonesia received a card giving them access to health and other fundamental services. In Sweden, child grants ensured that families were supported in their child-rearing responsibilities. In terms of good practices to prevent and address cyberbullying, some countries had adopted important

legislation on the matter. In Australia, an e-safety commissioner had been established to gather the views of children and help the Government to adopt the best policies to prevent such cases and promote healing.

90. With regard to partnerships and the role of private sector, she hoped that the Children's Rights and Business Principles were being promoted in all countries. The Global Child Forum being promoted by Sweden and the We Protect alliance of the United Kingdom were good examples of national initiatives to promote multi-stakeholder partnerships in the area of child rights. In the private sector, an important study had been launched in 2016 on the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation in tourism and travel. Efforts were being made to ensure that the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism would become mandatory.

91. On the issue of how to continue to capture the voices of children, children were the best experts on the issues affecting their lives. A study on children affected by deprivation of liberty, a current area of focus, would soon be launched and promoted in different countries in Latin America.

92. **Mr. Moustafa** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Group believed that Sustainable Development Goal 4 could be achieved by building and upgrading educational facilities that were child, disability and gender sensitive, and by providing a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all. Although some progress had been made in terms of school enrolment rates and the gender gap in schools, numerous challenges still hindered the achievement of free universal and compulsory primary education for all.

93. In August 2017, the Assembly of the African Union had adopted Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children, setting out ten aspirations to be achieved by 2040. The African Union had designated the theme of the Day of the African Child in 2018 as "Leave no child behind for Africa's development". The Day of the African Child in 2017 had been devoted to the 2030 Agenda and efforts made in the region to promote sustainable development.

94. The African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage had been launched in 20 of the 30 targeted countries and continued to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to member States and other stakeholders fighting that scourge. The African Union was also developing a compendium of child marriage laws across member States. Several African States were implementing the African Partnership to End Violence against Children, using advocacy and cross-border learning to strengthen political action. The African Common Position on the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa, the model law on ending child marriage in Southern Africa and the African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage of 2015 also supported the elimination of child marriage in Africa.

95. The issue of child-headed households had come to light because of the HIV epidemic and the large number of orphaned children. Knowledge of how to prevent HIV was very low in some areas in Africa, especially among girls, and adolescent pregnancy was among the gravest health-related issues facing girls. With regard to displaced children, political will would be needed to end conflicts and allow the safe return of children. Efforts should focus on long-term solutions to mitigate the root causes of displacement, while providing children with support and ensuring family reunification.

96. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union, at its open session on ending child marriage in Africa held in June 2017, had underlined the need for member States to criminalize child marriage, while ensuring the provision of appropriate health-care services for victims, and had requested the African Union Commission to take the steps necessary to raise awareness and enhance campaigns on ending all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of children, including child marriage. In October 2016, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had participated in the annual African Union high-level retreat for special envoys and mediators, raising awareness among participants of concerns relating to children and armed conflict that were relevant to their work. In September 2017, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child had released the first continental study on the impact of conflicts and crises on children in Africa.

97. Compliance with the Plan of Action adopted during the Special Session on Children was critical to the protection and promotion of children's rights, especially with respect to safe living environments, access to quality basic education, the promotion of opportunities for children and adolescents, and the elimination of discrimination and poverty. The African Group therefore advocated the elimination of female genital mutilation and forced child marriage.

98. **Ms. Sorto Rosales** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that its member States, reaffirming that the Convention on the Rights

of the Child was the highest standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents, welcomed the increase in the number of ratifications of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto and called for its universal acceptance.

99. The countries of the region were well known for their commitment to advancing the rights of the child. Mostly middle-income countries, they were working to address vulnerabilities due to poverty, racial discrimination, gender inequality, the effects of the global financial crisis and natural disasters, violence, organized crime, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and drug trafficking.

100. Education was a human right, a social investment and one of the most important public goods in terms of achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The CELAC member States attached importance to improving the quality of and promoting equality in education with a view to eradicating poverty and inequality. Investing in children and young people was imperative to build the human capital needed to turn demographic transitions into dividends that reduced poverty and generated prosperity.

101. While welcoming the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the preparatory process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, member States were concerned by the situations faced by children, in particular unaccompanied children and adolescents, in the context of large migratory movements. Given the complex reasons for such migration, it was important to coordinate the efforts of States and international organizations.

102. Violence was pervasive and had a lasting impact on children's lives, generating huge costs for society. The CELAC member States recognized the need to prevent and eliminate bullying, including cyberbullying, which affected a high percentage of children, compromising their health, emotional well-being and academic work. Efforts should be strengthened to develop early childhood programmes, with the support of international organizations. The international community should step up efforts to improve cooperation to assist developing countries in achieving all the internationally agreed development goals. Early childhood development policies and strategies should be supported as a way to break the cycle of poverty with the aim of achieving sustainable development.

103. Having recently celebrated the first review of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, the CELAC member States had committed themselves to taking all the steps necessary to gradually eliminate new HIV infections among children and mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

104. The CELAC member States underlined the importance of ensuring that the 2030 Agenda contributed to the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of the child. Advancing global efforts to eradicate poverty would require the international community's firm commitment to mobilizing all necessary resources and a multifaceted approach to ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of children.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.